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SIPDIS

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DEPT. FOR EUR/WE (MENNUITI), EUR/NCE,

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [SOCI RO](#) [SOCI RO VT](#) [VTPREL](#)

SUBJECT: THE POPE AND THE ROMANIAN PATRIARCH: REINFORCING
BRIDGES TO ORTHODOX EUROPE

SUMMARY

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1. (U) IN THE VATICAN, WHERE GESTURES AND SYMBOLS CARRY WEIGHT, POPE JOHN PAUL II PULLED OUT ALL THE STOPS DURING ROMANIAN ORTHODOX PATRIARCH TEOCTIST'S OCTOBER 7-13 VISIT TO VATICAN CITY AND THE CITY OF ROME. IN A SERIES OF EVENTS CULMINATING IN A SPECIAL MASS IN ST. PETER'S, THE PATRIARCH WAS ACCORDED THE HIGHEST OF HONORS PEPPERED WITH WARM FRATERNAL EMBRACES. THE VISIT WAS REMARKABLY SIMILAR IN POMP AND PROTOCOL TO A PAPAL VISIT ABROAD, AND WAS INTENDED TO RECIPROCATE THE WARM RECEPTION THE POPE RECEIVED IN ROMANIA IN 1999. WHILE THE POPE AND THE PATRIARCH ARE GOOD FRIENDS, THE HEARTY WELCOME TEOCTIST RECEIVED IS A CLEAR SIGN TO THE REST OF EUROPE'S ORTHODOX COMMUNITY THAT THE HOLY SEE INTENDS TO CONTINUE ITS VIGOROUS PURSUIT OF CLOSER RELIGIOUS AND GEOPOLITICAL TIES TO ORTHODOX EUROPE IN ORDER TO FURTHER POPE JOHN PAUL II'S LONG-HELD VISION OF EUROPE EXTENDING FROM THE ATLANTIC TO THE URAL MOUNTAINS. END SUMMARY.

ROLLING OUT THE RED CARPET

2. (U) PATRIARCH TEOCTIST'S "UNOFFICIAL" INTRODUCTION TO VATICAN CITY STATE BY THE POPE OCCURRED BEFORE AN AUDIENCE OF SOME 250,000 PILGRIMS ATTENDING THE CANONIZATION OF THE FOUNDER OF OPUS DEI. THE HOLY SEE USED THE OCCASION TO HONOR TEOCTIST'S STATUS AS A NATIONAL ORTHODOX LEADER -- THROUGHOUT HIS VISIT HE WAS SEATED ON THE SAME LEVEL AS THE POPE IN AN IDENTICAL CHAIR. PATRIARCH TEOCTIST'S SCHEDULE INCLUDED VISITS TO ROME'S MAJOR BASILICAS. IN EACH HE WAS
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ACCORDED THE HIGHEST OF HONORS. THE PATRIARCH ALSO VISITED THE SANT'EGIDIO COMMUNITY WHERE HE SPOKE OF CONSTRUCTING A CHRISTIAN EUROPE AND ON THE PERSECUTION SUFFERED BY ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AT THE HANDS OF THE COMMUNISTS. PATRIARCH TEOCTIST WAS GIVEN THE PULPIT DURING A MASS IN ST. PETER'S BASILICA THAT MARKED THE CONCLUSION OF HIS VISIT. IN HIS SERMON, HE URGED CHRISTIANS TO FILL THE VOID LEFT IN THE EUROPEAN PSYCHE BY SECULARIZATION AND EXPRESSED HIS GRATITUDE TO THE SANT'EGIDIO COMMUNITY FOR ITS INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS TO PROMOTE DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE WORLD'S PEOPLES.

OVERCOMING DIFFERENCES: PROPERTY AND PROSELYTISM

3. (U) IN A COMMON DECLARATION ISSUED OCTOBER 12, POPE JOHN PAUL AND PATRIARCH TEOCTIST CALLED FOR CLOSER RELIGIOUS TIES AND URGED ROMANIA'S CHRISTIANS TO SETTLE THEIR DISPUTES AMICABLY. (COMMENT: CATHOLICS IN ROMANIA ARE SEEKING RESTITUTION OF PROPERTIES CONFISCATED DURING THE COMMUNIST ERA AND HANDED OVER TO ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS. END COMMENT). ALSO AT ISSUE ARE CONVERSIONS TO CATHOLICISM AMONG NON-BELIEVERS WITH AN ORTHODOX HERITAGE. THE ORTHODOX CHURCH CONSIDERS SUCH NON-BELIEVERS TO BE THEIR NATURAL CONSTITUENCY, WHILE THE CATHOLIC CHURCH VIEWS THEM AS OPEN TO CONVERSION. THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN ROMANIA, AS IN RUSSIA, HAS MAJOR CONCERNS ABOUT LOSING CONSTITUENTS TO CATHOLICISM THROUGH SUCH "CONFESSIONAL COMPETITION." THE TWO LEADERS EFFECTIVELY SIDE-STEPPED THIS ISSUE BY CALLING FOR COOPERATION RATHER THAN COMPETITION IN THEIR RESPECTIVE MISSIONARY WORK AMONG NON-CHRISTIANS. THE POPE, HOWEVER,
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INSISTED THAT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH SEEKS TO SUPPORT THE MISSION OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH, WHILE BEING ABLE TO CARRY OUT ITS OWN PASTORAL TASK FOR ITS FAITHFUL "AND FOR THOSE WHO TURN FREELY TO HER."

COMMON CONCERNS: EU ENLARGEMENT AND EVANGELICALS

14. (U) THE LEADERS WERE IN FULL AGREEMENT ON THE NEED TO ENSURE THAT EUROPEAN UNION EXPANSION, WITH ITS SECULAR ORIENTATION, IS COMPLEMENTED BY RELIGIOUS VALUES AND INCREASING RELIGIOUS UNITY. TO THIS END, THE POPE AND THE PATRIARCH AGREED TO WORK TOGETHER TO GET THEIR ISSUES ON THE EU'S AGENDA. THESE INCLUDE THE SANCTITY OF LIFE, THE DIGNITY AND FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF THE HUMAN PERSON, JUSTICE AND SOLIDARITY, PEACE AND RECONCILIATION, THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FAMILY, AND PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT.

15. (SBU) BOTH LEADERS EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER WHAT THEY REGARD AS THE ENCROACHMENT OF "NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS AND

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ACTION EUR-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00	DOEE-00	SRPP-00
	DS-00	ED-01	UTED-00	VC-00	HHS-01	H-01	TEDE-00
	INR-00	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OMB-01
	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SCT-00	SP-00
	SS-00	TEST-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00
	PRM-00	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/007W	

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R 220957Z OCT 02
FM AMEMBASSY VATICAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC
INFO AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
USEU BRUSSELS

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SECTS" INTO FORMERLY COMMUNIST STATES. (NOTE: "NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS" IS A VATICAN EUPHEMISM FOR U.S.-BASED PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES. END NOTE). THE POPE AND THE PATRIARCH LAMENTED THE FACT THAT THESE COUNTRIES WERE SEEN AS "SPIRITUALLY
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EMPTY," VIRGIN TERRITORY BY THE NEW MOVEMENTS WHEN IN
REALITY CHRISTIANITY IS MILLENNIA-OLD AND DEEPLY-ROOTED IN
MOST OF THEM.

COMMENT

16. (SBU) POPE JOHN PAUL II USED HIS PERSONAL FRIENDSHIP WITH ROMANIAN PATRIARCH TEOCTIST, AS HE HAS PREVIOUSLY WITH AN ARMENIAN ORTHODOX LEADER, TO BOLSTER ECUMENICAL RELATIONS WITH THE ORTHODOX CHURCH. IN THE FACE OF PERCEIVED RUSSIAN ORTHODOX INTRANSIGENCE AND INCREASING PRESSURE FROM RUSSIAN AUTHORITIES ON THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN RUSSIA, SUCH BRIDGE-BUILDING PROVIDES A USEFUL COUNTERPOINT FOR THE POPE TO DEMONSTRATE THE POSSIBILITIES OF CATHOLIC-ORTHODOX DIALOGUE. AS LONG AS THIS POPE REMAINS IN OFFICE, THIS DIALOGUE WILL REMAIN A PRIORITY. IN FACT, THE POPE SUGGESTED THAT THIS DIALOGUE BE GIVEN AN INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE THAT WOULD PROVIDE FOR A MORE REGULAR ORTHODOX-CATHOLIC EXCHANGE. THE HOLY SEE AND ORTHODOX CHURCHES IN GENERAL VIGOROUSLY PROMOTE EUROPE'S HISTORICALLY CHRISTIAN HERITAGE IN THE CONTEXT OF EU EXPANSION TO FORMERLY COMMUNIST STATES. THE WELCOME TEOCTIST RECEIVED IN ROME IS PART OF A BROAD VATICAN STRATEGY TO CEMENT ECCLESIASTICAL ALLIANCES TO MATCH THE SECULAR ONES CENTERED ON BRUSSELS AND STRASBOURG, AND ALSO TO SHOW THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX THEY HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR FROM THIS POPE AND FROM CATHOLICISM.

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